

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /074 W

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R 121111Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2796

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 7134

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJECT: WHY THE ARMY MOVED - A RESTROSPECTIVE

REF: ISLAMABAD 6969

1. ONE OF THE MOST INTRIGUING QUESTIONS REGARDING THE IMPOSITION OF MARTIAL LAW ON JULY 5 IS WHY THE MILITARY CHOSE TO ACT WHEN IT DID. NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE PPP AND THE PNA HAD NOT FORMALLY BROKEN OFF AND THERE STILL SEEMED TO BE SOME POSSIBILITY OF A COMPROMISE AGREEMENT. BOTH SIDES HAD BEEN MAKING THREATENING STATEMENTS, BUT VIOLENCE WAS LIMITED. DURING THE PREVIOUS WEEKS OF
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POLITICAL AGITATION, THE MILITARY HAD CLUNG TO ITS CONSTITUTIONAL ROLE AND REFUSED TO ACT AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT DESPITE CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE FROM BOTH THE MIDDLE RANKS AND SOME SEGMENTS OF THE PUBLIC. WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE PERIOD WHEN TALKS WERE BEING HELD BETWEEN THE PPP AND PNA THAT LED THE ARMY TO CHANGE ITS MIND?

2. THE MOST IMPORTANT REASON FOR THE ARMY'S ACTION APPEARS TO BE GENERAL ZIA'S BELIEF THAT THE TWO SIDES WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO REACH AGREEMENT. HE EMPHASIZED THIS IN HIS CONVERSATION WITH THE EMBASSY OFFICE OF DEFENSE REPRESENTATIVE OFFICER ON JULY 5 (REFTEL), NOTING THAT THE TWO SIDES DISTRUSTED EACH OTHER COMPLETELY. HE CITED PPP RIOTING IN LAHORE OVER THE JULY SECOND WEEKEND AS THE PROXIMATE CAUSE FOR THE TAKE-OVER, BUT THESE WERE RELATIVELY MINOR INCIDENTS. WHAT HE MUST HAVE FEARED WAS THE OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE ON A LARGE SCALE IF THE TALKS BROKE DOWN. THE PPP HAD BEEN ARMING ITS SUPPORTERS AND BHUTTO'S POLITICAL ADVISOR MUSTAFA KHAR HAD WARNED THAT THE PPP WOULD STRIKE BACK IF THE OPPOSITION CONFRONTED IT IN THE STREETS. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT KHAR HAD CONVINCED BHUTTO THE PPP SHOULD "TAKE THE OFFENSIVE" IN PUNJAB. PNA HARLINERS HAD RESPONDED TO KHAR'S CHALLENGE WITH TOUGH TALK, AND APPEARED EQUALLY DETERMINED TO FIGHT IT OUT. THE ARMY UNDOUBTEDLY SAW THIS AS AN OMINOUS HARBINGER OF THINGS TO COME.

3. ZIA PROBABLY BELIEVED THAT THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN WOULD BE VIOLENT EVEN IF AN AGREEMENT WAS REACHED. RATHER THAN WAIT UNTIL A DETERIORATION IN THE SECURITY SITUATION NECESSITATED MILITARY INTERVENTION, HE EVIDENTLY DECIDED TO MAKE A PREEMPTIVE MOVE TO SAVE THE NATION FROM FURTHER TURMOIL AND PAVE THE WAY FOR FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS. THIS GAVE HIM THE ADVANTAGE OF SURPRISE AND ENABLED HIM

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TO ARREST KEY LEADERS OF THE OPPOSITION AND GOVERNMENT WHILE THEY WERE CONVENIENTLY LOCATED IN ISLAMABAD. AS A SIDE BENEFIT, THE ARMY'S IMAGE WAS REFURBISHED: IT HAD BEEN DAMAGED EARLIER WHEN PARTIAL MARTIAL LAW TO SUPPORT BHUTTO WAS IMPOSED ON LAHORE, HYDERABAD AND KARACHI. THE PUBLIC GENERALLY GREETED THE TAKE-OVER WITH RELIEF, AN INDICATION THAT THEY REGARDED IT AS BOTH TIMELY AND WELCOME, A PLUS FOR THE MILITARY.

4. BOTH ZIA AND SOURCES CLOSE TO BHUTTO HAVE SAID TO US THAT THE PM HAD BEEN TOLD THE ARMY WOULD NOT SUPPORT HIM AGAIN IN THE STREETS AND THAT IF AN IMPASSE IN THE TALKS DEVELOPED, THE MILITARY WOULD TAKE OVER. BHUTTO HAD NO HINT, HOWEVER, THE ARMY WOULD MOVE EARLY ON JULY FIFTH, AND SEEMED TO BELIEVE THAT HE COULD STAY IN POWER AS LONG AS HE KEPT THE TALKS GOING. ZIA HAS TOLD FOREIGN DIPLOMATS THAT THE MILITARY HAD CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR A TAKE-OVER, AND ALL THE SERVICE CHIEFS HAD AGREED ONE OF THE PLANS COULD BE IMPLEMENTED WHENEVER ZIA THOUGHT IT NECESSARY.

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 7134

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

THE ARMY CHIEF HAS SAID THAT HE ALONE MADE THE
DECISION TO MOVE ON JULY 5, CERTAIN THAT HE WOULD HAVE
THE SUPPORT OF THE OTHER CHIEFS AND HIS CORPS COMMANDERS.

5. BHUTTO DID NOT WANT TO HOLD ELECTIONS AND HOPED TO
SPLIT THE OPPOSITION BY DRAGGING OUT THE NEGOTIATIONS.
THIS, AND HIS CONCERN THAT THE ARMY BELIEVE THERE WAS NOT
A NEGOTIATING DEADLOCK, MAY EXPLAIN THE LAST MINUTE PRESS
CONFERENCE HE CALLED ABOUT TWO HOURS BEFORE HE WAS
ARRESTED IN WHICH HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE TALKS WERE STILL
OPEN AND FURTHER MEETINGS WOULD TAKE PLACE. WHEN THE
TAKE-OVER FIRST OCCURRED, IT WAS THOUGHT BY SOME TO BE
ANOTHER BHUTTO TRICK, BUT THIS NOTION WAS QUICKLY DISPELLED
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ONCE IT WAS LEARNED THAT HE AND HIS PARTY WERE REALLY OUT

OF POWER.

6. IT IS MORE DIFFICULT TO ASSESS THE POSITION OF THE PNA AND WHAT THEY MAY HAVE KNOWN OF THE ARMY'S INTENTIONS. SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THE PNA, OR AT LEAST CERTAIN HARDLINERS LIKE ASGHAR KHAN, WERE OUT TO SABOTAGE ANY AGREEMENT WITH BHUTTO. OTHERS SPECULATE THAT ASGHAR HAD BEEN TIPPED BY FRIENDS IN THE MILITARY THAT THE TAKE-OVER WAS IN PREPARATION AND THAT HE IMPOSED FURTHER NEGOTIATING DEMANDS TO TRIGGER IT OFF. WE DO KNOW THAT THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE OF THE LAST NEGOTIATING IMPASSE WAS AN ADDITIONAL TEN DEMANDS - INCLUDING REPORTEDLY THE RELEASE OF WALI KHAN - THAT THE PNA MADE TO BHUTTO AFTER BOTH NEGOTIATING TEAMS HAD AGREED ON AN ACCORD TEXT. A LIKELY POSSIBILITY IS THAT THE PNA, GIFTED ONCE AGAIN WITH A BLIND SENSE OF IMPENDING EVENTS, MADE WHAT WITH HINDSIGHT SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN THE RIGHT DECISION WITHOUT REALLY KNOWING IT.

7. ZIA HAS SAID THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING FOR THE ARMY TO DO IS TO HAND POWER BACK TO CIVILIAN CONTROL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THE GOODWILL THAT THE TAKE-OVER HAS ENGENDERED FOR THE ARMY WILL QUICKLY DISSIPATE IF POLITICAL LEADERS REMAIN OVERLY LONG IN "PROTECTIVE CUSTODY" AND ELECTIONS ARE DELAYED. DESPITE THE RISKS INVOLVED IN ALLOWING THE POLITICAL PROCESS TO FUNCTION AGAIN, THE ARMY MUST REMEMBER THAT THE MOVEMENT WHICH TOPPLED BHUTTO COULD TURN AGAINST IT WITH EQUAL FURY IF THE ARMY IS NOT PREPARED TO RELINQUISH POWER.
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